The Virtue Of The Last Ten Days of Ramadan AND Laylat Al-Qadr

By
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Praise be to Allaah, the Rabb (Cherisher and Sustainer) of the Worlds, and peace and blessings be upon the Trustworthy Prophet Muhammad and upon all his family and companions.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to strive hard (in worship) during the last ten days of Ramadaan in a way that he did not strive at any other times. (Muslim, 1175, from 'Aa'ishah). Among the things he did were secluding himself in I'tikaaf and seeking Laylat al-Qadr during this time. (Al-Bukhaari, 1913; Muslim, 1169). In al-Saheehayn it is reported from the hadeeth of 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) that when the last ten days of Ramadaan came, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) would stay up at night, wake his family and gird his loins. (al-Bukhaari, 1920; Muslim, 1174). Muslim added: he strove hard and girded his loins.

Her phrase "girded his loins" is a metaphor for his preparing himself to worship and strive hard in worship, more than usual. It has the meaning of "rolling up one's sleeves" to worship (i.e. getting ready to make a great deal of effort).

It was also said that it was a metaphor for keeping away from women and abstaining from sexual relations.

The phrase "stay up at night" means that he would stay awake, spending the night in prayer, etc. It was reported in another hadeeth that 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) said: "I never saw the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) recite the entire Qur'aan in one night, or spend a whole night in prayer until the morning, or fast an entire month, except in Ramadaan." (Sunan al-Nasaa'i, 1641). The words "stay up at night" may mean that he spent most of the night in worship, or that he did not stay up for the entire night, but he did that at the times of 'Ishaa and Suhoor, and other times, in which case it would mean that he stayed up for most of the night.

The phrase "and wake his family" means that he would wake his wives to pray qiyaam. It is known that he (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to wake his wives all year round, but he

used to wake them to spend part of the night in qiyaam. In Saheeh al-Bukhaari it is reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) woke up one night and said, “Subhaan Allaah! What tribulations have come down tonight! What treasure has come down tonight! Who will wake up the dwellers of the apartments? There may be women who are clothed in this world and naked in the Hereafter.” (al-Bukhaari, 1074). It was also reported (in Saheeh al-Bukhaari) that he (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to wake ‘Aa’ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) when he wanted to pray Witr. (al-Bukhaari, 952). But when he woke his wives during the last ten nights of Ramadaan, this was more persistent than at other times of the year.

The fact that he (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) did this indicates the importance he attached to worshipping his Rabb and making the most of this special time.

The Muslim should follow the example of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), for he is the best example, and he should strive hard in worshipping Allaah. He should not waste the hours of these days and nights. For we do not know, perhaps this time will never come again, for the spoiler of pleasures, i.e., death, which must come to all men, may come and snatch him and his life will end; then he will feel regret at the time when regret will be of no avail.

Among the unique virtues of these special nights is that Laylat al-Qadr is among them. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Haa-Meem. [These letters are one of the miracles of the Qur’aan and none but Allaah (Alone) knows their meanings.] By the manifest Book (this Qur’aan) that makes things clear. We sent it (this Qur’aan) down on a blessed night [(i.e. the Night of Al-Qadr) in the month of Ramadaan]. Verily, We are ever warning [mankind that Our Torment will reach those who disbelieve in Our Oneness of Lordship and in Our Oneness of worship]. Therein (that night) is decreed every matter of ordainments. As a Command (or this Qur’aan or the Decree of every matter) from Us. Verily, We are ever sending (the Messengers), (As) a mercy from your Rabb. Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower.” [al-Dukhaan 44:1-6]

Allaah sent down the Qur’aan on this night which the Rabb of the Worlds has described as blessed. It was reported from a group of the Salaf – including Ibn ‘Abbaas, Qutaadah, Sa’eed ibn Jubayr, ‘Ikrimah, Mujaahid and others – that the night on which the Qur’aan was sent down was Laylat al-Qadr.

The phrase Therein (that night) is decreed every matter of ordainments means, on that night the destiny of all creatures for the coming year is decreed. On that night it is written who will live, who will die, who will be saved, who will be doomed, who will be destined for Paradise, who will be destined for Hell, who will be granted honour, who will be humiliated, where drought and famine will occur, and everything else that Allaah wills in that year.

What is meant by the idea that the destiny of all creatures is written on Laylat al-Qadr is – and Allaah knows best – that on Laylat al-Qadr they are transferred from al-Lawh al-Mahfooz. Ibn ‘Abbaas said: “You may see a man furnishing his home or plowing his field, and he is one of those who are going to die,” i.e., it has been decreed on Laylat al-Qadr that he is one of those who are going to die (in the coming year). And it was said that on this night, the destiny of people is shown to the angels.

The meaning of “Qadr” is veneration or honour, i.e. it is a night that is venerated because of its special characteristics, and because the one who stays up during this night becomes a man of honour. And it was said that Qadr means constriction, in the sense that the knowledge of precisely when this night is, is hidden. Al-Khaleel ibn Ahmad said: it was called Laylat al-Qadr because the earth is constricted by the great numbers of angels on that night, and Qadr means constriction. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): “But when He tries him, by straitening his means of life [fa qadara ‘alayhi rizqahu]…” [al-Fajr 89:16], i.e., by constricting or reducing his provision.

And it was said that Qadr means Qadar, i.e., that on this night the decrees for the coming year are ordained, as Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Therein (that night) is decreed every matter of ordainments” [al-Dukhaan 44:4]

1. and because Allaah’s decrees are decided and written down on this night.

So Allaah has called it Laylat al-Qadr, because of its great value and high status with Allaah, and because so many sins are forgiven and so many faults are concealed during this night. For it is the night of forgiveness, as it was reported in al-Saheehayn from Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Whoever stays up during Laylat al-Qadr out of faith and in the hope of earning reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven.” (al-Bukhaari, 1910; Muslim, 760).

Allaah has given this night special characteristics which make it unique:

1. It is the night on which the Qur’aan was sent down, as we have stated above. Ibn ‘Abbaas and others said: “Allaah sent down the Qur’aan at one time from al-Lawh al-Mahfooz to Bayt al-‘Izzah in the first heaven, then it was revealed to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) in stages according to events over twenty-three years.” (Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 4/529)

2. Allaah described it as being better than a thousand months, as He said (interpretation of the meaning): “The night of al-Qadr is better than a thousand months” [al-Qadr 97:3].

3. Allaah described it as being blessed, as He said (interpretation of the meaning): “We sent it (this Qur’aan) down on a blessed night” [al-Dukhaan 44:3].

4. On this night, the angels and the Spirit [al-Rooh] descend, “i.e., many angels descend of this night because it is so blessed, and the angels come down when Allaah’s blessing and mercy come down, just as they come down when Qur’aan is recited, and they surround the circles of dhikr (gatherings where Allaah is remembered), and they beat their wings for the one who sincerely seeks knowledge, out of respect for him.” (See Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 4/531). The Spirit [al-Rooh] is Jibreel (peace be upon him), who is specifically mentioned in this manner as a sign of respect for him.

5. This night is described as peace, i.e., it is safe, for the Shaytaan cannot do any evil or cause any harm on this night, as Mujaahid said. (See Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 4/531). On this night, many people are saved from punishment because of what they do to worship Allaah, may He be glorified.

6. “Therein (that night) is decreed every matter of ordainments” [al-Dukhaan 44:4 – interpretation of the meaning], i.e., the affairs of that year are dispatched from al-Lawh al-Mahfooz to the angels who record the decrees: who will live, who will die, what provision people will be given, what will happen until the end of that year, every matter of ordainments is decreed, and it cannot be altered or changed. (See Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 4/137, 138). All of this is already known to Allaah before it is even written down, but He makes known to the angels what is to happen, and commands them to do whatever they are enjoined to do. (Sharh Saheeh Muslim li’l-Nawawi, 8/57).

7. Allaah forgives the previous sins of the one who stays up and prays during this night out of faith and in hope of earning the reward from Him. It was reported in the hadeeth of Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Whoever fasts the month of Ramadaan out of faith and in the hope of earning reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven, and whoever stays up during Laylat al-Qadr out of faith and in the hope of earning reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven.” (Agreed upon). The phrase “out of faith and in the hope of earning reward” means, believing in Allaah’s promise of reward for this, and seeking the reward, with no other aim or purpose, such as showing off etc.” (Fath al-Baari, 4/251).

Allaah has revealed a soorah concerning this night which will be recited until the Day of Resurrection, in which He mentions the honour and great value of this night. This is the soorah in which He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Verily, We have sent it (this Qur’aan) down in the Night of Al-Qadr (Decree). And what will make you know what the Night of Al-Qadr (Decree) is? The Night of Al-Qadr (Decree) is better than a thousand months (i.e. worshipping Allaah in that night is better than worshipping Him a thousand months, i.e. 83 years and 4 months). Therein descend the angels and the Rooh [Jibreel] by Allaah’s Permission with all Decrees, (All that night), there is peace (and goodness from Allaah to His believing slaves) until the appearance of dawn.” [al-Qadr 97:1-5]

The phrase And what will make you know what the Night of Al-Qadr (Decree) is? serves to draw attention to the importance and great significance of this night.

The Night of Al-Qadr (Decree) is better than a thousand months means, it is better than over eighty three years, as we have already mentioned. This is a great virtue, the value of which no one can fully understand except the Rabb of the Worlds, may He be blessed and exalted. This encourages the Muslim to spend this night in prayer and to seek the Face of Allaah by doing so. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to seek this night, hoping to gain some good from it, and he is the example for this Ummah.

It is mustahabb to seek it during Ramadaan, especially in the last ten nights of the month. It was reported in Saheeh Muslim that Abu Sa’eed al-Khudri (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) did I’tikaaf during the first ten days of Ramadaan, then he did I’tikaaf during the middle ten days in a Turkish tent [the word qubbah, translated here as “tent”, refers to a tent or any circular structure] in which a mat was placed. He said: so he took the mat in his hand and put it at the side of the tent, then he raised his head to speak to the people, so they came closer to him. He said: “I did I’tikaaf during the first ten days, seeking this night, then I did I’tikaaf during the middle ten days. Then someone came to me and told me that it is in the last ten days, so whoever among you wants to do I’tikaaf, let him do so.” So the people did I’tikaaf with him. He said: “I was shown an odd-numbered night, in the morning of which I was prostrating in mud and water”. Then in the morning of the twenty-first, he got up to pray Subh and it was raining; the roof of the mosque leaked, and there was mud and water. He came out when he had finished praying, and there was mud and water on his forehead and nose. That was the morning of the twenty-first, one of the last ten days. (Saheeh Muslim, 1167).

In a report, Abu Sa’eed said: “It rained on the night of the twenty-first, and the roof of the mosque leaked over the place where the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was praying. I looked at him, when he had finished praying Salaat al-Subh, and his face was wet with mud and water.” (Agreed upon). Muslim narrated a hadeeth from ‘Abd-Allaah ibn Unays (may Allaah be pleased with him) that was similar to the hadeeth of Abu Sa’eed, except that he said, “it rained on the night of the twenty-third.” According to a hadeeth narrated by Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with them both), the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Seek it in the last ten days of Ramadaan, when there are nine days left, and seven days left, and five days left.” (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 4/260).

Laylat al-Qadr is in the last ten days of Ramadaan, as stated in the hadeeth of Abu Sa’eed quoted above, and as stated in the hadeeth of ‘Aa’ishah, and in the hadeeth of Ibn ‘Umar who said that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Seek Laylat al-Qadr in the last ten days of Ramadaan.” (The hadeeth of ‘Aa’ishah was narrated by al-Bukhaari, 4/259; the hadeeth of Ibn ‘Umar was narrated by Muslim, 2/823. This wording is that of the hadeeth of ‘Aa’ishah).

It is more likely to be one of the odd-numbered nights, because of the hadeeth of ‘Aa’ishah who said that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Seek Laylat al-Qadr in the odd-numbered nights of the last ten nights.” (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 4/259)

We should seek it especially in the odd-numbered nights, i.e., on the twenty-first, the twenty-third,

the twenty-fifth, the twenty-seventh and the twenty-ninth. It was reported in al-Saheehayn that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Seek it in the last ten nights, on the odd-numbered nights.” (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 1912, see also, 1913. Also narrated by Muslim, 1167, see also 1165).

According to the hadeeth of Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with them both), the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Seek it in the last ten nights of Ramadaan, when there are nine left, when there are seven left, when there are five left.” (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 1917-1918). So it is more likely to be one of the odd-numbered nights.

In Saheeh al-Bukhaari it was narrated that ‘Ubaadah ibn al-Saamit said: the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came out to tell us when Laylat al-Qadr was, and two of the Muslims were arguing. He said: “I came out to tell you when Laylat al-Qadr was, and So and so and So and so were arguing, so it [the knowledge of when Laylat al-Qadr was] was taken away from me. Perhaps this is better for you. So seek it on the ninth and the seventh and the fifth” (al-Bukhaari, 1919), i.e., on the odd-numbered nights.

This hadeeth indicates how bad it is to argue and fight, especially with regard to matters of religion, and that this is a cause of goodness being taken away or concealed.

Shaykh al-Islam ibn Taymiyah said: “But odd-numbers have to do with what is past [i.e., when one starts counting from the beginning of the month], so it should be sought on the twenty-first, the twenty-third, the twenty-seventh or the twenty-ninth; or it may be with regard to what is left, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: ‘when there are nine left, or seven left, or five left, or three left.’ On this basis, if the month has thirty days, these will be even-numbered nights, so on the twenty-second there will be nine days left, on the twenty-fourth there will be seven days left. This is how it was explained by Abu Sa’eed al-Khudri in the saheeh hadeeth, and this is how the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) prayed qiyaam during this month. If this is the case, then the believer should seek it in all of the last ten days.” (al-Fataawaa, 25/284, 285).

Laylat al-Qadr is more likely to be in the last seven days. Ibn ‘Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) reported that a man among the companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was shown Laytal al-Qadr in a dream, and that it was one of the last seven nights. The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “It seems that your dreams agreed that it is one of the last seven nights, so whoever wants to seek it, let him seek it in the last seven nights.” (narrated by al-Bukhaari, 1911; Muslim, 1165). Muslim reported: “Seek it in the last ten nights, and if any of you are weak or unable to do that, then let him not miss the last seven.”

It is most likely to be on the night of the twenty-seventh. It was reported, in a hadeeth narrated by Ahmad from Ibn ‘Umar, and a hadeeth narrated by Abu Dawood from Mu’aawiyah, that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Laylat al-Qadr is the night of the twenty-seventh.” (Musnad Ahmad and Sunan Abu Dawood, 1386). The view that it is the night of the twenty-seventh is the opinion of most of the Sahaabah and the majority of scholars, and Ubayy ibn Ka’b (may Allaah be pleased with him) used to assert, without saying “in shaa Allaah”, that it was the night of the twenty-seventh. Zurr ibn Hubaysh said: I said: What makes you say that, O Abu’l-Mundhir? He said: by the signs of which the Messengers of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) told us: that the sun rises that morning with no visible rays. (Narrated by Muslim,2/268).

Many marfoo’ ahaadeeth were narrated which said that it was on this particular night.

Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with them both) also stated that it is the night of the twenty-seventh. He reached this conclusion by means of an amazing process. It was reported that ‘Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) gathered the Sahaabah together and included Ibn ‘Abbaas even though he was very young. They said, “Ibn ‘Abbaas is like one of our children. Why have you brought him here with us?” ‘Umar said: “He is a youth who has a good mind and who asks lots of

questions." Then he asked the Sahaabah about Laylat al-Qadr, and they agreed that it was one of the last ten nights of Ramadaan. He asked Ibn 'Abbaas about it, and he said: "I think I know when it is: it is the night of the twenty-seventh." 'Umar said, "What makes you think that?" He said, "Allaah made the heavens seven, and the earths seven, and the days seven, and He created man from seven, and He made Tawaaf seven (circuits), and al-Saa'ee seven, and the stoning of the Jamaar seven." So Ibn' Abbaas thought that it was the night of the twenty-seventh because of this analysis. This has been soundly reported from Ibn 'Abbaas.

Another of the ways in which the conclusion was reached that it is the night of the twenty-seventh is by noting that the word fihaa (therein) in the aayah (interpretation of the meaning): "Therein descend the angels and the Rooh [Jibreel]" [al-Qadr 97:4] is the twenty-seventh word of Soorat al-Qadr [in the original Arabic].

There is no shar'i evidence (daleel) to support this manner of analysis, and there is no need for such calculations, because we have sufficient shar'i evidence available to us.

The fact that it is usually the night of the twenty-seventh – and Allaah knows best – does not mean that this is always the case. It could be the night of the twenty-first, as mentioned in the hadeeth of Abu Sa'eed quoted above, or it could be the twenty-third, as mentioned in the report of 'Abd-Allaah ibn Unays (may Allaah be pleased with him) quoted above. According to a hadeeth narrated by Ibn 'Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with them both), the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Seek it in the last ten days of Ramadaan, when there are nine days left, and seven days left, and five days left." (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 4/260).

Some of the scholars thought that it is more likely that Laylat al-Qadr moves and does not come on a specific night each year. Al-Nawawi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: "This is the apparent meaning because of the conflict between the saheeh ahaadeeth on this matter, and there is no way to reconcile the ahaadeeth apart from saying that Laylat al-Qadr moves." (al-Majmoo', 6/450).

Allaah has concealed this night so that His slaves will strive to seek it, and will strive hard in worship, just as He has concealed the hour of jumu'ah, and so on.

So the believer should strive hard during the days and nights of these ten days, seeking Laylat al-Qadr and following the example of our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), and he should strive in making du'aa' and seeking to draw close to Allaah.

It was reported that 'Aa'ishah said: "I said, 'O Messenger of Allaah, what do you think, if I witness Laylat al-Qadr, what should I say?' He said: 'Say, O Allaah, You are Forgiving and Generous, and you love forgiveness, so forgive me.'" (Narrated by Imaam Ahmad, al-Tirmidhi (3515) and Ibn Maajah (3850). Its isnaad is saheeh).

Thirdly: a greater virtue is attached to I'tikaaf on this night than on any other night of the year. I'tikaaf means staying in the mosque to worship Allaah, may He be exalted. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to spend these ten days in I'tikaaf, as stated in the hadeeth of Abu Sa'eed quoted above. He spent the first ten days in I'tikaaf, then the middle ten days, then he told them that he had been seeking Laylat al-Qadr, and that he had been shown that it was in the last ten days, and he said: "Whoever was doing I'tikaaf with me, let him do I'tikaaf for the last ten days." It was reported from 'Aa'ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to do I'tikaaf during the last ten days of Ramadaan until he passed away, then his wives did I'tikaaf after him. (Agreed upon). There is also a similar report narrated from Ibn 'Umar.

When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) wanted to do I'tikaaf, he would pray Fajr, then enter the place where he was to do I'tikaaf, as was stated in al-Saheehayn from the hadeeth of 'Aa'ishah.

The four imaams and others (may Allaah have mercy on them) said that he entered it before the

sun set, and they interpreted the hadeeth as meaning that he entered his place of I'tikaaf and kept away from people after Salaat al-Subh, not that this was the time when he started his I'tikaaf. (See Sharh Muslim li'l-Nawawi, 8/68, 69; Fath al-Baari, 4/277). It is Sunnah for the person in I'tikaaf to keep himself busy with worship, and it is forbidden for him to have intercourse or to do anything that leads to it, because Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): "And do not have sexual relations with them (your wives) while you are in I'tikaaf (i.e. confining oneself in a mosque for prayers and invocations leaving the worldly activities) in the mosques" [al-Baqarah 2:187].

And he should not go out of the mosque except in the case of a pressing need.

The signs by which Laylat al-Qadr is known

The first sign: it was reported in Saheeh Muslim from the hadeeth of Ubayy ibn Ka'b (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) announced that one of its signs was that when the sun rose on the following morning, it had no (visible) rays. (Muslim, 762).

The second sign: it was reported from the hadeeth of Ibn 'Abbaas narrated by Ibn Khuzaimah, and by al-Tayaalisi in his Musnad, with a saheeh isnaad, that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Laylat al-Qadr is a pleasant night, neither hot nor cold, and the following day the sun rises red and weak." (Saheeh Ibn Khuzaymah, 2912; Musnad al-Tayaalisi).

The third sign: it was reported by al-Tabaraani with a hasan isnaad from the hadeeth of Waathilah ibn al-Asqa' (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Laylat al-Qadr is a bright night, neither hot nor cold, in which no meteors are seen." (Narrated by al-Tabaraani in al-Kabeer. See Majma' al-Zawaa'id, 3/179; Musnad Ahmad).

These three saheeh ahaadeeth explain the signs which indicate Laylat al-Qadr.

It is not essential for the one who "catches" Laylat al-Qadr to know that he has "caught" it. The point is to strive hard and to be sincere in worship, whether or not one knows that one has "caught" it. It may be that some of those who do not know that may be better with Allaah and higher in status than those who did know which night it was, because the former strove hard. We ask Allaah to accept our fasting and our prayer at night, and to help us to remember Him and to thank Him and to worship Him properly. May Allaah bless our Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).